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Haikai in Brazil

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In 1925, Oswald de Andrade published a book that, together with *Paulicéia Desvairada* (“Twisted Pauliceia¹”), by Mario de Andrade, would establish a landmark in the new Brazilian poetry. This book, entitled *Pau Brasil* (“Brazilwood”), was illustrated by Tarsila do Amaral and had its preface written by Paulo Prado, both considered symbols of Modernism back in 1922.

In this preface, Prado presents the book as a pivotal moment in Brazilian poetry that would sweep away “the literary weight of imported ideas” that had paralyzed this poetry for more than a century.

Asserting that Oswald’s naïve and direct lyric poem constituted a continuation of the work of Casimiro de Abreu and Catulo da Paixão Cearense, he recorded that it was also “the first organized effort toward the liberation of Brazilian verse” and for the establishment of the “new Brazilian language”, that would basically consist of the “rehabilitation of our everyday speech”.

In this context of the exposition of a radical program of nationalist renewal of Brazilian literature, there is an extract that is worthy of comment:

We also hope that “pau brasil” poetry will extinguish once for all one of the biggest ills of the race – that of overblown and dragging eloquence. In this hurried time of quick achievements, the tendency is for the rude and naked expression of sensations and feelings, in a total and synthetic honesty:

« Le poète japonais
Essuie son couteau:
Cette fois l'éloquence est morte ».

affirms the Japanese haikai in its honed concision. A great day for Brazilian literature – obtaining frag-

ments of poetry in pills².

So Japanese haikai seems to be a model of colloquiality, a direct record of sensation and feeling and a suitable form for the fast-paced present. It is also a non-European literary model for the Brazilian nationalist project, which aimed, in its own words, “to break the ties that bind us from birth to a decadent and drained Old Europe”.

We now know that the anonymous Japanese haikai, raised as a modernist flag, was neither haikai, nor Japanese. However, it was read as such for more than 60 years³. The history of the name and image of the haikai that allowed to Paulo Prado to insert this tercet in the preface of Oswald’s book preface is also the history of the first moment of assimilation of Japanese haikai into Brazilian literature. To retrace it, we have to go back in time so that we can understand some of the principal traits of the representation of Japanese poetry in the West, with particular attention to Brazil.

I

The first presentations of the Japanese literature in the West appeared in travel books. With European colonial expansion, the passion for this kind of literature reached its apogee in the last quarter of the 19th century. A noteworthy example of the many testimonies to the success of the genre is a text written by Eça de Queiroz in 1881, in which the astonished novelist recorded the huge quantity of books of this genre published in London, remarking:

1 NT: “Paulicéia” is simultaneously the name of a municipality in São Paulo State, and a sobriquet for the city of São Paulo.

2 Prado, Paulo. “Poesia Pau Brasil”. In Oswald de Andrade. *Pau Brasil*. Paris: Sans Pareil, 1925, – repr. fac-similar EDUSP/Imprensa Oficial, 2004.

3 For an accurate analysis of this text and its history see the article “Um certo poeta japonês”, in *Estudos de Literatura Brasileira e Portuguesa*, Paulo Franchetti. Cotia: Ateliê, 2007.

“previously, someone would talk about a journey they happened to have made [...] Not now. Nowadays, people undertake to travel purely to write a book about it.”

And in addition:

“nowadays, if in some intricate spot of the globe you come across a character wearing a pith helmet, pencil in hand and binoculars hanging from a shoulder strap, do not think that what you see is an explorer, a missionary, or a wise man collecting rare flowers – it is just an English writer preparing his book⁴.

Now, the same Japan that had been closed to western eyes for 200 years, from its opening to the West in the middle of the 19th century, provided a generous registry of peculiarities and construction of many idealizations.

The strict ethical codes that underpinned the Samurai's services, the detailed etiquette of the feudal royalty, the refined sense of decoration and the taste for a life in contact with nature fascinated travelers. As well as the bizarre customs: the social bath, tiny glasses and plates, the crickets locked in cages, the make-up and behavior of the geishas, and the nutritional habits.

For those who, as a result of the trip, celebrated the superiority of the western civilization, Japan was just another store full of picturesque articles. For those who traveled to the ends of the Earth searching for a model that was alternative or antagonistic to the ways of western bourgeois society, the country seemed like a sort of a lost pre-industrial paradise, protected, miraculously, from contact with the destructive power of money and western technology.

As such, haikai and other Japanese arts were either valued for their contrast to the decadence in taste and quality of life of industrial society, or relegated to the level of a local curiosity and recorded with ridicule.

In the Portuguese language, up to the first decades of the 20th century, there are few exceptions to the latter view of Japanese poetry. In fact it seems that

4 “Acerca de livros”. *Gazeta de Notícias*, in Rio de Janeiro, 17 e 18/11/1881. Repr. in *Éça de Queirós*.

only the solitary figure of Wenceslau de Moraes (1854-1929) who, in his book *Relance da Alma japonesa*⁵(1926), presented haikai in a manner that diverged completely from recording picturesque exoticisms.

In Brazil, even a sensitive and sympathetic observer of the Japanese culture such as historiographer Oliveira Lima wrote, in 1903, about the lack of originality in the country's literature:

The *naga-uta* of the 20th century (...) celebrate with the same emotion as that of the *tanca* of the 8th century and sometimes with identical concepts, because plagiarism – something natural for a scarcely inventive race – is not considered a sin in Japan with the perfumed glory of the plum tree glory and the modesty of the *lespedeza*⁶.

And regarding the poetic forms, he added:

The insignificance of this little flower that receives such attention by Japanese, is better suited to the younger relative of *tanca*, the *haikai*, a poem of three verses or phrases with 5, 7 and 5 syllables, respectively, which in the 17th century came to the aid of the limited Japanese inspiration, giving it an even more accessible form, simpler and more popular, for condensing an ideas, or rather a sensation, in a mold sometimes as difficult obscure as a charade⁷.

The first positive mention of haikai in Brazil comes from Afrânio Peixoto. His volume 1919, entitled *Trovas populares brasileiras*⁸, assimilated the Japanese format into the popular ballad, and Peixoto introduced it as a “lyrical epigram”, recognizing in it not the bizarreness of its form, but an “untranslatable charm”⁹.

Peixoto first came across haikai through a book written by Paul-Louis Couchoud (1879-1959), nowadays a forgotten writer, but an important name in Orientalism in the early 20th century.

5 “Relaunching the Japanese Soul”

6 Lima, Oliveira. *No Japão: impressões da terra e da gente*. 3ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1997, p. 181.

7 Idem. *Ibidem*, p. 182.

8 “Brazilian folk ballads”

9 Goga, H. Masuda. *O Haikai no Brasil*. São Paulo: Oriente Company, 1988, p. 22.

Couchoud had been in Japan from September 1903 to May 1904 and had contact with the Japanese literature through the papers of some Europeans who were settled there, mainly Basil Chamberlain (1850-1935).

As a consequence of these trips and reading, in 1905 Couchoud along with two friends produced his first poems inspired by haikai: 72 tercets without meter or rhyme, which tried to reproduce the spirit rather than the form of this type of Japanese poetry.

In 1906, based on Chamberlain's monograph of 1902 entitled *Basho and the Japanese Poetical Epigram*¹⁰, Couchoud published two studies in the *Les Lettres* magazine: "Les haikai" and "Les Épigrammes lyriques du Japon", illustrated with around one hundred translated haikais, seemingly most of them from English¹¹.

Couchoud wrote this beautiful definition of the haikai, in which he emphasizes its singularity:

It is a Japanese poem in tercets, or rather, in three small part phrases, the first with 5 syllables, the second 7, and the third 5: 17 in total. It is the most elementary of the poetic genres. [...] It can be compared neither with a Greek or Latin couplet, nor a French quatrain. Neither is it a "thought", a "witty saying", a proverb, nor an epigram in the modern sense, nor even in the former sense, i.e., an inscription, but a simple picture in three brushstrokes, a cameo, a sketch, sometimes a simple record (*touche*), an impression¹².

Reproduced in the book *Sages et poètes d'Asie* (1916), this text went around the world, preceded by a preface by Anatole France, becoming one of the main references on the subject for readers trained in French.

In Brazil, Couchoud's book was for a while the main source of knowledge about haikai. It provided the

basis not only for the text by Afrânio Peixoto, but also another by Osório Dutra, an expressive poet of his time, who nevertheless asserted in a chronicle dated November 20, 1920, that the art of poetry in Japan was very poor – because the country was unfamiliar with not only the sonnet, the ballad, and pastoral poetry but also rhyme itself – and furthermore that haikai was a fruit of this poverty. In his own words:

It is evident that, with such a limited number of syllables, not even genius poets could produce anything of worth! The haikai was the lifeline for the mediocre and for the void. Since the *tanca* went beyond the infinite poverty of its inspirations, they found its simplification to be vital and launched this extravagant genre, which Couchoud considers to be a "picture in three brushstrokes"¹³.

Osório Dutra's attitude, however, was looking toward the 19th century, not the 20th. In this, haikai was gaining space and recognition in literary circles, mainly due to Couchoud and his friends' activities. By 1920, it has already become sufficiently important for the *Nouvelle Revue Française* to dedicate ample column space to the French-language version.

Notable among Couchoud's group was Julien Vocance (the pseudonym of Joseph Seguin, 1878-1954). Vocance, who had published, in 1916, a successful haikai collection entitled *Cent visions de guerre*, published in 1921, at the apogee of the new genre, a poetic work in tercets, in which he organized his ideas on haikai and its role as an example for a new poetic attitude. This was "Art Poétique", published in *La Connaissance* magazine.

It was the first verse of this poem – which was fighting for a condensed and objective poetry, far from the traditional French eloquence – that was recognized by Paulo Prado as a Japanese haikai and inserted into the preface of *Pau Brasil* volume.

Consequently, the first significant example of haikai in Brazilian literature occurred by a European route, in accordance with the interest of the vanguard after

10 Published in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. XXX, part II, 1902.

11 The sources mentioned by Couchoud are Chamberlain and Cl.-E. Maître, author of an article about the haikai published at the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, which access was not possible for me. The Couchoud's text is available in a new edition: *Le haikai – Les épigrammes lyriques du Japon*. Paris: La Table Ronde, 2003

12 Couchoud, *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

13 Dutra, Osório. *O país dos deuses – aspectos, costumes e paisagens do Japão*. Rio de Janeiro: Leite Ribeiro Bookstore, 1922, pp. 231-2.

the First World War. Nevertheless, at this moment, there is no indication that would be any echo in Brazil of the interest of the English-language vanguard in this form.

II

In fact, the first appropriation of haikai in Brazilian literature would be in a Modernist work, not of the vanguardist line, but of a line that maintained stronger bonds with the literature from the beginning of the century.

It was Guilherme de Almeida who made haikai known in Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s¹⁴. He has achieved this by consistent action, contrary to exotic weirdness.

In his adaptation of haikai, he used basically two formal characteristics of the Japanese poem: the distribution of words into three phrasal segments (which he identified as verses as defined in the Portuguese manner), and a composition of two juxtaposed phrases in a topic/remark structure.

But since the 17 original syllables distributed in three verses of different size and without rhyme had no interesting rhythmic effect, Guilherme de Almeida added two rhymes to his haikai: one of them linking the first verse to the third, and another internal to the second verse, between the second and final syllables.

Take this example:

Desfolha-se a rosa

Parece até que floresce

O chão cor-de-rosa

As the leaves fall from the rose.

It seems that it blooms

And red the ground goes.

Using this resource, Guilherme de Almeida was able to extend the metric regularity since, with the

cadence of the rhyme, there is now the following metric sequence: 5 syllables, 2 syllables, 5 syllables, 5 syllables. This results, insofar as possible, in a pronounced and recognizable flow of the poem, with three isosyllabic segments and a perfectly assimilated interruption for accentuation of the pentasyllable.

In addition, he included a title to eliminate the imprecise and somewhat enigmatic nature of haikai.

To understand what his adaptation of Japanese poetry consisted of, consider now two haikais that, along with the previous one, Guilherme de Almeida considered among his favorites:

Um gosto de amora
Comida com sol. A vida
Chamava-se: “Agora”¹⁵.

The truth is that Guilherme de Almeida’s poems seem to fail as haicais, not for their rhyme or metric, but for their attitude which can be easily identified on reading from the titles given to them.

Read as transcribed above, without a title, this tercet could be classified as a haikai in the Japanese tradition, because it has an unexpected perception arising from a concrete sensation: the mulberry’s taste seems to be in the present, like a sensitive note, that ends up being reinforced by an evocation of a past time and state.

However, when read with its title, that impression disappears:

INFÂNCIA¹⁶
Um gosto de amora
Comida com sol. A vida
Chamava-se: “Agora”.

In this version, the mulberry’s taste belongs to the past, it is just a remembrance of a taste, a mental image, not an instant experience. Because of the title, the mulberry is not a *kigo* anymore (a word for a specific season) that triggers a certain emotion.

¹⁴ The following analysis resumes, very briefly, that to be found in the article “Guilherme de Almeida e a história do haikai no Brasil”, from the book *Estudos de literatura brasileira e portuguesa*, as already mentioned.

¹⁵ A taste of mulberry
Eaten in the Sun. Life
Was known as: “Now”.

¹⁶ “CHILDHOOD”

Now it is a feeling that recreates a sensation as a symbol of something lost.

As such, the first popular adaptation haikai of haikai in Brazil in fact consisted of a suppression of its singularity and its adoption simply as a format, a space for exercising virtuosity, almost as if it were some type of shortened sonnet.

III

The next moment in the history of the incorporation of haikai of Brazilian literature – the second teething, using Oswald’s words – had a diametrically opposite focus with deeper, broader repercussions.

As had happened previously, the inspiration and information comes from outside the country, not from the haikai production in Japanese – brought to Brazil by Japanese immigration from 1908 – neither from contact with the Japanese community [in Brazil].

The direct source is an essay by Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), an American who had lived for many years in Japan and had become a great expert in Japanese art. This work was called “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry” and was only edited in 1919 by Ezra Pound, who commented on it in many of his notes¹⁷.

It was this text by Fenollosa that gave Pound an idea of great importance for the development of his poetry: that Japanese and Chinese poetry possess an extremely efficient compositional principle, different from the western logical order.

According to Fenollosa, “in this process of composition, two things put together cannot produce a third one, but they suggest a fundamental relationship between them”. This is the principle of montage, which for Fenollosa and Pound would guide both the creation of their own ideograms and the work of arts generated by an ideogrammatical civilization.

Starting from this principle, Pound would point out the value in haikai of the organizational format

of discourse by juxtaposition, where the relation between the juxtaposed parts is metaphorical in nature. Ideogrammatical composition was, as is known, of great importance to Pound’s thinking, who could see in it the basis for Imagism, as well as the structural principles for his masterpiece *Cantos*.

It was through Pound that haikai had a pronounced effect on the new Brazilian poetry. And it was through his efforts and works that reflection on Japanese and Chinese poetry and writing acquired a notable importance for Brazilian critics, via the works of Décio Pignatari, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, who, since 1955, had been spreading Pound’s ideas in Brazil, turning reflection on the “ideogrammatical principle of composition” into one of the central points in the new vanguard poetry called “Concrete Poetry”¹⁸.

The interest of the Concrete Poetry movement in haikai is principally manifested by the publication in the *Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper of two articles by Haroldo de Campos, in 1958 and 1964: “Haikai: homenagem à síntese”¹⁹ and “Visualidade e concisão na poesia japonesa”²⁰. These articles, later incorporated into the book *A arte no horizonte do provável*²¹ (1969), put forward – in addition to Pound’s ideas and the relevance of haikai to their constitution – comments on Sergei Eisenstein’s text on montage (*Film form*, 1929) and also some examples of translations of classical Japanese haikai, according to Fenollosa and Pound’s ideas on the ideogram²².

Because of his way of thinking, Haroldo de Campos held his attention on the ideogram, placing it at the center of everything as the structural principle of haikai poetry. As such, he practically reduces the interest of haikai for our tradition to the literary procedure of the ideogrammatical production.

17 There is a Brazilian translation in Haroldo de Campos (org.) *Ideograma – lógica, poesia, linguagem*. São Paulo: Cultrix / Edusp, 1977.

18 For an analysis of the role of the ideogram in the production of the concrete poetry project see Franchetti, *Alguns aspectos da teoria da poesia concreta* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 1993). For more detailed comments on Haroldo de Campos’ translation, see Franchetti, “Apresentação”, in *Haikai – antologia e história*. (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 1996).

19 “Haikai: in praise of synthesis”

20 “Visuality and concision in Japanese poetry”

21 “Art on the horizon of the probable”

22 *A arte no horizonte do provável*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1969. The Eisenstein essay was also translated in the book *Ideograma*, op cit.

Consequently, his translations, compared to original texts, suffer from an excessive emphasis on the technique of composition and from a distancing from what constitutes and characterizes a good part of the actual haikai format in the Bashô tradition: dialogue with something that is not said, modesty as a value in composition, and the rejection of gloss gained purely by the manipulation of words.

In this sense, even with all the differences of era and place from which they speak, Haroldo de Campos' approach to haikai is similar to that of Guilherme de Almeida. That is to say, both see haikai from an essentially formal point of view, and both are seeking room for technical virtuosity in haikai (as a lyrical production or as a translation).

None of the three principal poets and idealists of Concrete Poetry dedicated themselves to producing haikai. In this movement, only Pedro Xisto (1901–1987) produced haikais, publishing a collection of them in a book called *Partículas*, in 1984²³.

The period between the launch of concrete poetry launching and the compilation of Pedro Xisto's haikai was, for many reasons, the golden period for haikai in Brazil in terms of its dissemination and adaptation.

These milestones bookend the productions of two authors who made haikai definitively popular in Brazil: Paulo Leminski and Millôr Fernandes.

IV

Millôr (1923), who was also a founder of the famous newspaper *Pasquim*, have always had his works published in large-circulation magazines such as *O Cruzeiro* and *Veja*. From 1948, he published satirical, comical, lyrical and even just witty tercets, which he called “Hai-Kais”. Published together in a book in 1986 and currently available on the author's homepage, they are poems of great dissemination and public success.

The Millôr's “Hai-Kai” is usually an epigram (most

²³ Pedro Xisto, *Partículas*, org. Marcelo Tápia, São Paulo: Massao Ohno/Ismael Guarnelli, 1984.

times composed by a single phrase) in three free verses, with a rhyme between the first and the third verses.

To Millôr, as he has himself put on record, the haikai is a “fundamentally popular and frequently humorous in the most metaphysical sense of the word”. At the same time, he informs that his interest in haikai as an “economical and direct form of expression”, dates from 1957, when he was the head of the humor section at *O Cruzeiro* magazine.

Always accompanied by a drawing by the author to complete the poem's meaning, to dialogue with it or merely as an illustration, their main characteristic is to produce a witty saying, whose irony as a rule is accented by the sing-song tone provided by the use of pronounced rhymes.

The colloquial and ironic tone relate the Millôr's hai-kai to Oswald de Andrade's poetry (especially that in the *Primeiro Caderno*) and integrate him into the poem-joke style of Brazilian Modernism. The disposition into three spatial segments, however, seems to be the only thing that he took from the traditional poem.

Colloquialism and irony are also characteristics of the haikai of Paulo Leminski (1944-1989)²⁴. Nevertheless, in his case, the interest in haikai is not limited to this or to the tercet's free style.

The importance of Leminski to the story of the appropriation of haikai by Brazilian culture is considerable, because it would bring together the technical approach of concrete poetry and zen orientalism, which was typical of the conterculture of the late-20th century. Caetano Veloso rightly defined it as a “mixture of concretism with beatnik” and saw in it a “Haikai with a background in Brazilian culture”.

In Paulo Leminski's texts can be found, revived by a call to practice the “Zen” way of life, the presence of Allan Watts – mentor of Californian orientalism in the 1950s and 1960s, a brilliant intellectual who, when it comes to the subject of spreading the Buddhist religious thought, was only two rivaled by D. T. Suzuki – and Reginald Blyth, who wrote some

²⁴ For an analysis of Leminski's position in the new Brazilian poetry, see the article “Pós-tudo: a poesia brasileira depois de João Cabral”, from the book *Estudos de literatura brasileira e portuguesa*, cited above.

of the fundamental texts about Japanese thought and poetry of the 20th century.

Besides being a good poet, Leminski also had the gift of using the media with skill and efficiency. Suspicious of academic formality and what he called the “Aristotelian logic” of language in concretism, he appealed to the irrational experience as a source of knowledge for haikai and for everything else. “Whoever wants to understand zen”, he said, “should enroll at the nearest martial arts academy.”

At the same time, he could maintain a relationship with technical virtuosity and intellectual “sharpness” marked by a playful tone in a register between innocence and wonderment.

Many of his poems have an unmistakable “haikai flavor” and a great freedom regarding their forms, which sometimes allows the use of rhymes and assonance, sometimes the use of blank verse without meter, and sometimes the poem has a visual composition, taking advantage of space and the physical forms of letters and words.

As such, when related to the Brazilian tradition, his haikai represents a moment of spectacular adaptation of the format and genre to Portuguese, combining an emphasis on the technique of ideogrammatical montage – to which he was very attentive – with the traditional Japanese call to base haikai in a practice, i.e., to see it as a life choice, a way of bringing the poetry into everyday life, identifying it as the most graceful and good-humored expression of the most basic sensory experience.

V

In this brief history, such as I have been telling it until now, there is an enormous absence: the Japanese community settled in Brazil who had arrived in successive waves of immigration, a process that started a century ago in 1908.

However, this absence can be explained. Although the Japanese community keeps up haikai production in the Japanese language and some of its members have been involved in the important work of

spreading and adapting haikai to the Brazilian way, the appropriation of its form and spirit happened almost without their participation.

It is right to say that Guilherme de Almeida had contact with Masuda Goga and other Japanese haikai practitioners, but the result of his work shows that he did not base his experience on the immigrant tradition. Those who did, such as Jorge Fonseca Jr, for example, remained unknown and without an expressive work.

Thus, if history ended at haikai’s moment of glory in Brazil – Leminski’s moment of renown as a poet – there would be no need to refer to the practices of the Japanese community, despite it being a very interesting and noteworthy tradition for which Nempuku Sato (1898-1979) was a pre-eminent figure.

Nempuku Sato was a disciple of Kyoshi Takahama (1874-1959), who in turn was one of the principal disciples of Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) the restorer of traditional haikai in Japan and one of the four important figures of the art, along with Bashô, Issa and Buson.

When Nempuku emigrated to Brazil, his master gave him the mission of sowing haikais in the country. And that was exactly what he did, composing in Japanese and spreading this art within the immigrant groups. One of his disciples was Hidekazu Masuda Goga (1911), who years later in São Paulo, in the company of Teiiti Suzuki – a professor at the University of São Paulo – would keep the fire of Japanese haikai burning.

And here we get to the last chapter of the history of haikai in Brazil, leading up to the present day.

At the end of the 1980s, Masuda Goga took part in the creation of a center – still active – for the production of traditional Japanese haikai in the Portuguese language. Besides the regular practice along traditional lines, Goga researched into the acclimatization of haikai in Brazil, resulting in a book published both in Japanese and Portuguese, in 1986 and 1988, entitled “Haikai in Brazil”, which was basically of an informative nature²⁵. In the following decade, in

²⁵ Goga, H. Masuda. *Burajiru no haikai* (O haikai no Brasil). Tóquio: *Haiku bungakukan kiyô*, v.4, 1986. *O Haikai no Brasil*. São Paulo: Oriente Company, 1988.

1996, he and his niece Teruko Oda, published the first Brazilian dictionary of *kigo* (words referring to the seasons of the year), using for examples haikais composed in the traditional way²⁶.

The group formed around Masuda Goga represents a new phase in the appropriation of haikai into Brazilian literature. For the first time, the traditional practice of Japanese haikai is transposed directly into the national language, with all the difficulties this implied, starting with the classification of *kigos* in a country that crosses 20% of Earth's latitude.

From the viewpoint of this group, the specifics of haikai are used to promote a wide or an intense perception of the world, through the sensation linked to the succession of seasons in the year.

The importance of the flow of seasons to classical Japanese haikai cannot be overemphasized. On reading the texts of the masters of the genre, it is quite clear that the specificity of haikai resides in reducing the poem to the contrast between the fugacity of sensation and its resonance in the various strings of sensitivity and memory. Classical haikai uses *kigo* to place this sensation in a wider framework. Many times, *kigo* represents the here-and-now, the feeling that originates from a certain emotion, but sometimes it allows the creation, very economically, of a characteristic mood that involves and attributes meaning to a given sensory impression. This is why *kigo* has such importance in Japanese haikai.

Due to traditional extraction, the group's practices emphasize respect for *kigo* and promotes its systematic classification. Sometimes, the urge to classify and establish Brazilian seasonal terms seems to be the primary objective to the detriment of haikai. This is especially the case for haikais that make use of unusual words, such as *hibernal*, *vernal*, *arrebol*, etc. In other cases, the pursuit of seasonal contexting at any price produces an artificial effect that is also a hindrance to an accomplished poem.

In general, the poetry made by this group is not very effective from a poetic point of view. But there are already noteworthy highlights. Nisei poet Teruko

Oda stands out from the whole not only for the work she has been producing, but also for her intense educational activity in workshops, contests and the leadership of haikai groups.

Characterized by her clear social concern and sometimes let down by some sentimentalism, her haikais have received wide acceptance, especially in the school environment. One of her books was recently acquired by the State of São Paulo government as part of a library development program for public elementary schools. This is a noticeable example of the form assimilating, because this book – now included in São Paulo's school libraries – makes available haikais in the traditional Japanese format, i.e., guided by the practice of haikai in Japanese within the communities.

Currently there are several aspects of Brazilian haikai that coexist actively in Brazil: the traditionalist, the zen-inspired, the type adopted by Guilherme de Almeida, the epigrammatic and the concretist style. The apparent novelty is the syncretism that operates between them (with the exception of the Guilherme branch, which has little dialogue with the others), and this reinforces the incorporation of principles and practices of traditional haikai, previously understood to be more an activity, an apprenticeship in a particular way of looking at the world and using language, rather than a compositional technique or a fixed and exotic format.

This new moment, for this very reason, makes it possible to imagine that poetry of Japanese origin will continue to have an interesting role as a counterpoint in Brazilian literature – given its unique and simultaneous demand for the impersonality of language and its reduction of the poem to a concrete sensory experience – to the dominant tendencies in current Brazilian poetry, which also interact in a diverse manner: the administration of the heritage of the minimalist concrete poetry of João Cabral de Melo Neto (1920-1999), the ever-present confessional efflorescence, and the persistent academic belletrism.

26 Goga, H. Masuda and Teruko Oda. *Natureza - Berço do Haikai*. São Paulo: Empresa Jornalística Diário Nippak, 1996.

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